

# A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE FUNCTION OF GUIDANCE COUNELORS

by

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### ABSTRACT

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A Critical Analysis of the Function of Guidance Counselors: A Literature Review

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The purpose of this study was to investigate the research into the function of guidance counselors. The critical analysis addresses the following objectives: to investigate the origin of guidance counseling, to investigate available research into the function of guidance of counselors, and to investigate the available research into teachers' perceptions of the function of guidance counselors.

The origin of guidance counseling was discussed in detail. Early guidance counselors focused solely on students' careers after school, further emphasizing career vocation. The field has expanded through the implementation of placement testing, mental health counseling and federal legislation to emphasizing overall student well being.

While there is some variance among experts and professional organization concerning the function of guidance counselors, most agree that school guidance today is developmental, comprehensive, and focuses on the overall well being of students. Guidance models have been developed, supplying guidance counselors a clear set of constructs in which to work. Competencies have been established to enhance student learning through student development.

Teachers' perceptions of the functions of guidance counselors were also examined. Research revealed that the perception of the function of school counselors contrasted greatly between teachers and counselors. The misperceptions result in inconsistent, incomplete, or ineffective guidance programs. Lack of communication and lack of appropriate training were addressed as key influences on teachers' misperceptions.

Finally, the research was analyzed and discussed. A summary of findings was presented and conclusions were drawn. Recommendations based upon the literature discussed were provided.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

The concept of developmental guidance was born early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. From its inception through the 1950s, the focal point of guidance in a school setting was vocational education and training. Heavily influenced by the industrial revolution and world war, the concern of counselors and teachers alike was to prepare students for life after high school (Muro & Kottman, 1995). From a guidance perspective specifically, that meant steering students to careers that best fit their abilities and goals.

By the 1950s, developmental guidance had grown to incorporate the molding of student attitudes and behaviors. More emphasis was placed on the mental health and emotional well being of children. Most influential in this area were leaders like E.G. Williamson and Carl Rogers.

Due to threats brought forward by the Cold War, the early 1960s saw further emphasis placed on the role of guidance counselors. Legislation was passed (The National Defense Education Act) that provided funds for training counselors for the middle and high school levels (Muro & Kottman, 1995). The new legislation also assisted individual states to develop better testing programs, better counseling, and more guidance related programs.

By the late 1960s, the role of the school counselor began to take its current shape. In its contemporary state, guidance has grown to include counseling, planning, placement, referral, and consultation (Schmidt, 1993). At the same time, guidance at the elementary school was being developed and implemented. Along with the development

of elementary guidance came the emphasis on prevention, intervention, and coordination (Muro & Kottman, 1995).

As the field of developmental guidance has grown, so have the emphasis educators have placed on coordination and cooperation. In a well functioning school environment, cooperation exists between all school staff members. For a comprehensive guidance program to flourish, cooperation between school counselors and teachers is paramount.

According to Nugent (1990), next to counselors, teachers are the most important component in implementing a successful comprehensive guidance program. By and large, teachers are the key adult figure in the average pupil's school day. They are the most influential figures, be it positive or negative, to the average student. This is particularly true at the elementary level, where children spend the majority of their day in one classroom.

Without teacher support and involvement, developmental guidance won't work. Teachers represent the first line of defense in identifying special needs. They are the key advisors to the children and represent the best hope of personalization of learning. Teamwork between teachers and counselors is a necessity for guidance programs to thrive.

School counselors and teachers have co-existed in the school setting for quite some time. One would assume that over that period of time both professions would come to understand and accept one another. Some research suggests otherwise.

According to Myrick (2003), some teachers hold misconceptions about the role and function of counselors. Counselors are sometimes reviewed as administrative assistants who have little time to counsel students.

Fueling the misconception is the fact that some teachers distrust counselors, due to their apparent alignment with administration. These teachers are wary of counselors observing students in their classrooms. They worry that their teaching methods are being evaluated as if counselors work as the eyes and ears of the administration.

Teachers who are uncooperative and unsupportive have criticized developmental guidance in general. These teachers believe that counselors have little, if any, impact on student behaviors or student performance. They do not like students from their classrooms working with counselors. They may even refuse to send their students to the guidance office. The refusal is based on the belief that counselors really do not help, and sending students to the guidance office during class time is a waste of time that only penalizes the student. Still other teachers will send their students to see the counselor, but only during student recess (Muro & Kottman, 1995).

Myrick (2003) suggested that other misconceptions exist. For instance, some teachers believe that counselors always align themselves with the students, at the expense of the teacher. They claim that students go to the counselors to complain about unfair treatment. Some teachers feel that counselors only hear half of the story, and it causes counselors to sit in judgment of them.

In a recent survey of over one hundred elementary school teachers, the data showed that few of the teachers understood guidance. Even fewer had an understanding of the nature of counseling. Some of the more established teachers in the study had a



better grasp of the goals of guidance, yet most felt that the first objective of counselors was to provide specialized help that focused on children who were considered to be classroom behavior problems (Muro & Kottman, 1995).

It is unfortunate that teachers are not more aware of the true objectives of developmental guidance. Undergraduate courses that are required for elementary education certification often overlook the function and significance of guidance. Thus, the task of orientating teachers to the concept of developmental guidance may often fall upon counselors.

For guidance to be effective, a sense of teamwork and cooperation must exist between teachers and counselors. Therefore, it is imperative that teachers and counselors be aware of and comprehend the perceptions that each holds for the other. Through that awareness and understanding, the goals of guidance can be met.

It is imperative for guidance counselors to appreciate the origin of school counseling in order for them to develop an understanding of the functions of today's guidance programs. Also significant is the perceptions teachers have in regards to the functions of school counselors. It is crucial for teachers and counselors to have a common awareness of the functions of school counselors in order for guidance programs to be effective. Therefore, counselors and teachers must willingly work together. This review of literature intends to investigate the functions of school counselors and teachers' perceptions of the functions of school counselors. This literature review aspires to narrow the gap between counselor functions and teachers' perceptions of counselor functions.

### Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to investigate the research addressing the function of guidance counselors. Data will be collected in the summer of 2003 through a critical analysis of available literature.

### Rationale

This critical analysis of research is significant through its investigation of the functions of guidance counselors and prevailing perceptions regarding the function of guidance counselors by professionals (teachers) most associated with them. An investigation of available literature will enhance the understanding of the function of guidance counselors, as well as the expectations others have for them.

### Objectives

This analysis of research will address 3 objectives:

1. To investigate the origin of guidance counseling.
2. To investigate available research regarding the function of guidance counselors.
3. To investigate available research regarding teacher perceptions of the function of guidance counselors.

### Definition of Terms

Counseling - Interaction between students and school professionals in which thoughts and feelings are explored in confidence. The focus is placed on the students and their understanding of the world around them. The goal of counseling is to help students grow in understanding themselves and others.

Developmental guidance - Comprehensive program that fosters planned intervention within educational and human services programs to facilitate and

stimulate the total development of all students. It strives for growth in personal, social, career, ethical, cognitive and aesthetic domains and promotes the interpretation of the domains into an individual's lifestyle (Myrick, 2003).

Effectiveness - Length to which a goal is achieved or a task accomplished.

Function -Duties or tasks specific to a given role or position.

Perceptions - Means toward gaining an intelligent interest in the values of human beings; understanding or insight into people or objects (Winker, 1988).

Role - Title or position; the part an individual plays in a team effort,

School guidance counselor - School professional that provides individual and group counseling for students. Not intended to have the effects of psychotherapy, its emphasis is on the emotional, academic, and career development of all students.

### Assumptions and Limitations

A limitation of this analysis may exist in the availability of research to be investigated, particularly published studies measuring teacher's perceptions of the function of guidance counselors. Also of concern are generalizations literature may make concerning the function of guidance counselors without regard to the educational level in which they are working. For instance, the function of a secondary counselor may be very different than that of an elementary counselor.

It is important to note that the results of this literature review will be based on an overall review of literature. The findings of this study are not intended for use within a specific school district. Emphasis placed on individual counselor functions may vary

from state to state, or district to district. Accordingly, teachers' perceptions may also vary.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Review of Related Literature

#### Introduction

This chapter will focus on the pertinent topics discussed in the literature including: the origins and development of school counseling, the function of school counselors, and teacher perceptions of school counselors.

#### The Origins and Development of School Counseling

The field of developmental guidance, at all levels of a school system, is relatively new. In relation to the teaching profession, school guidance is in its early stages. To understand the importance and direction of developmental guidance today, it is important to understand the origins of the field.

As the 20<sup>th</sup> century began, the concept of developmental guidance did not exist. School counselors did not exist. Aside from academic instruction, teachers were the main providers of student career guidance (Schmidt, 1993).

Michigan high school teacher Jesse B. Davis is credited with providing initial educational and vocational counseling to students. Later, as a high school principal in 1907, he mandated that guidance be included as an element of his school's English classes (Wittmer, 1993).

Around the same time, Eli Weaver was implementing his version of guidance in New York. In his program, Weaver required students, with help from teachers, to formulate career plans. Additionally, he helped create teacher guidance committees in an

attempt to help students cultivate their own strengths. The goal was for students to use those strengths to find suitable employment after high school (Stone & Bradley, 1994).

Frank Parsons is also a key figure in the evolution of guidance. Remembered by some as the “Father of Guidance,” he instituted a scientific selection process to assist students in choosing a career path. Later Parsons trained vocational counselors to assist in educational facilities. He was instrumental in getting students and educators alike to think about career development (Muro & Kottman, 1995).

As Parsons was known as the “Father of Guidance,” William H. Burnham has been credited with being the “Father of Elementary Guidance” (Faust, 1968). Burnham contributed a rationale for developing guidance specifically for the elementary schools. He was the first to promote programs and activities in an elementary setting that were both preventative and developmental in nature (Baruth & Robinson, 1987).

World conflict has been instrumental in the development of guidance, especially in the element of career testing. Early in World War I, army recruits were randomly assigned military occupations without regards to aptitude or ability. Early results of this system proved disastrous. Battlefield performance suffered because some soldiers had been assigned tasks they simply weren’t able to accomplish. Recruits who were illiterate were mistakenly thrust into officer positions (Aubrey, 1982).

By World War II, the armed services had learned from its mistakes. Testing was developed that measured recruits’ intelligence and ability. These tests were used to screen and classify inductees into suitable positions. After the war, professional educators adapted some of the tests to use with students. Thus, the guidance and counseling movement expanded to include the elements of testing and measurement.

The expansion of developmental guidance arrived with the 1950s. Stronger emphasis was placed on the mental health of students. E.G. Williamson devised a guidance model based on trait and factor theory that became extremely popular. The emphasis of his model was for counselors to teach skills and help mold attitudes and behavior (Baker, 1992).

For a 10 -year period beginning in 1957, federal legislation was the driving force behind the development and expansion of school guidance. Several legislative acts, many fueled by Cold War politics, were passed that directed additional funding to schools. In large part, the funds were used to enhance existing guidance programs or to help implement guidance programs in districts where they previously didn't exist (Stone & Bradley, 1994).

To secure the funds, schools needed to prove that they employed a counselor and that the counselor had adequate facilities and clerical assistance. Consequently, the demand for school counselors rose dramatically across the country. In 1964, further legislation encouraged school districts to hire counselors at the elementary level as well (Schmidt, 1993).

Guidance continued to grow and change through the next 30 years. Throughout that time even stronger emphasis on career exploration was a hallmark of guidance programs through the 1980s and 1990s. Over the same period of time, the number of elementary counselors had grown proportionately to rival the number of secondary counselors.

As the profession of school guidance counseling has grown, so have professional organizations that represent the field. Organizations such as the American Counseling

Association (ACA) and the American School Counselors Association (ASCA) work to promote and support developmental guidance.

### Function of School Counselors

For the purpose of this study, the term “function” refers to the specific duties performed by individuals in the role of school counselor.

School counselors have traditionally been expected to fill diverse and often conflicting roles. They have been called to act in the capacity of confidant, disciplinarian, consultant, scheduler, politician, administrator, psychologist and academic helper. The ambiguity about counselors’ roles and expectations has created confusion among teachers, support staff, parents, and students. Ettinger, Lambert, & Rudolf (1994) note “in some schools, counselors are told to focus much of their time on record keeping, administrative responsibilities, or crisis interventions with students. There is little time for comprehensive career exploration and planning for life after graduation” (p.25).

In addition, facilities and resources for planning and implementing career guidance and counseling programs are sadly lacking. The student-to-counselor ratios in most schools limit the services that counselors can deliver. The following list of tasks is limited, yet typical (Gysbers & Henderson, 1994):

- Counselors register and schedule all new students.
- Counselors are responsible for administering tests.
- Counselors teach classes when teachers are absent.
- Counselors send students home that are inappropriately dressed.
- Counselors assist with duties in the principal’s office.
- Counselors compute grade point averages.



--Counselors are in charge of student records.

--Counselors are assigned lunchroom duty and supervise study halls.

With the whole range of unrelated assignments of counselors, it is not surprising that various guidance needs of many students go unmet. When schools fail to clearly define the counselor's role, school administrators, parents with special interests, teachers, or others may feel their agenda ought to be the guidance program's priority. The results often lead to confusion and criticism. Additionally, the changing terminology concerning the guidance program compounds the situation. Traditionally, the guidance program was considered to be an ancillary student service that remained isolated from the instructional program and designed mainly to encourage students to attend college. Furthermore, counselor's work was reactionary and crisis-oriented in assisting students with everyday life occurrences (Walz & Ellis, 1992).

Adding to the confusion is the perception that school counselors place students in classes based on their personal biases. Some teachers feel that counselors reserve classroom space or counseling time for students they favor (Maddy-Bernstein, 1994). In fact, professional school counselors examine their own biases and stereotypes and understand that they are ethically bound to avoid preferential student treatment. Ultimately, school counselors are cognizant that students are to be held responsible for all their decisions. In turn, students must be aware of and understand all their options if they are to make informed decisions.

Today there is a general agreement among counselor educators that the guidance program refers to a comprehensive, developmental program designed to benefit all

students in their journey through school. The program is designed to address the developmental needs of students appropriate to their age group.

In that light, the function of a guidance counselor is not easily defined. Myrick (2003) suggested that function definition was dependent upon the group of people creating the definition. For example, students may see the function of guidance counselors much differently than do teachers. In turn, teachers may perceive the function of counselors much differently than administrators, who may view their function much differently than do counselors themselves.

Other variables come into play when trying to determine the function of school counselors. For instance, the functions a counselor performs at the high school level may differ greatly from the functions of an elementary counselor. Additionally, an established and veteran counselor may very well perform different functions than a first-year counselor. Other factors such as age and gender may influence function definition as well.

The American Counseling Association (ASCA) has devised a description that helps define the function of a school counselor. The definition views guidance counselors as consulting agents, coordinators, and counselors (ASCA, 1997). Other models exist that attempt to explain various counselor functions.

Myrick (2003) grouped counselor functions into six categories that focus mainly on the development of the student:

1. Individual counseling with at-risk or high priority students.
2. Small group counseling, preferably with four to five members that meet a minimum of once per week.

3. Large group classroom guidance.
4. Peer facilitator programs.
5. Consultation, with teachers, administration, school personnel, and parents.
6. Coordination of guidance services, including testing, career information, educational placement, and orientation.

Gysbers and Henderson (2000) developed a comprehensive guidance model that placed functions into four components:

- a. Guidance curriculum
- b. Responsive services
- c. Individual planning
- d. System support

The guidance curriculum component covers the delivery of classroom lesson plans to all students in the school, as well as consultation with teachers and other school personnel so that they can provide additional guidance lessons. Responsive services covers critical incidents and crisis intervention. Individual planning covers future and career planning for each student. The system support component refers to the supporting role a guidance counselor plays within a complete school system (Hanna & Bemak, 1997).

Gibson and Mitchell (2003) defined counselor functions as guidance activities, and comprised a list of ten activities that serve as a guideline for the overall function of guidance counselors:

1. Individual assessment
2. Individual counseling

3. Group counseling and guidance
4. Career assistance
5. Placement and follow-up
6. Referral
7. Consultation
8. Research
9. Evaluation and accountability
10. Prevention

Bradley and Stone (1994) stated that the function of guidance counselors varied, depending on the grade and emotional level of the students involved. These authors devised separate guidance principles for both primary and secondary guidance counselors. The function of primary counselors was perceived to be activity driven with students, teachers and parents. The function of secondary counselors was thought to be less activity driven and more cognitively directed. Secondary counselors' functions focused more intently on educational, career, and personal information and development.

The American School Counselors Association (ASCA) views the primary goal of a school counseling program is to enhance student learning through student development. Student development is comprised of three areas that encompass a variety of student learning competencies. The competencies form the foundation of a developmental guidance program. The three areas of student development are:

- a. Academic development
- b. Career development
- c. Personal/social development

Rather than defining specific counselor functions, ASCA recognizes that counselors utilize a variety of strategies, activities, methods, and resources to promote student development. The primary methods in which to deliver an effective school counseling program include:

1. Counseling
2. Consultation
3. Coordination
4. Case management
5. Guidance curriculum
6. Program evaluation and development
7. Program delivery

The Wisconsin Developmental Guidance Model (WDGM) presents an organized and systematic approach to the delivery of an effective developmental guidance program. The model is based on student needs and the developmental stages they pass through; competencies are matched for age and grade-level groups. Like ASCA, the WDGM focuses on three major areas of development: learning, personal/social, and career/vocational. Counselor functions are drawn from these developmental areas (Wilson, 1992).

The model emphasizes the importance of coordination from a variety of people for a guidance program to be successful. Counselors, along with teachers, work together with administrators and school support staff to provide students a quality, comprehensive guidance program. There is a close relationship between all resource people with the school counselor at the core of the system.

### Teachers' Perceptions of the Function of Guidance Counselors

The function of school counselors may be perceived differently from one district to another. Perceived functions may also vary among staff members within a single district. It is important for counselors to understand the perceived functions of school personnel so that effective interaction can take place.

For guidance programs to be truly effective, teachers, counselors and administrators must work together with a common goal in mind. Counselors have a clear perception of their function, but those perceptions may be very different than that of teachers, as well as administrators, students and parents. For truly effective comprehensive developmental guidance to take place, cohesion and cooperation amongst everyone in a school system must exist.

Counselors depend on teachers for support and interaction. When teachers have varying expectations of the function of counselors, and expectations are unclear, the teacher-counselor relationship is sure to suffer. The result is a guidance program that is rendered ineffective.

Real teamwork among school staff cannot take place when members don't understand the roles each play. Therefore, it is paramount that roles and expectations are clearly defined for each group. The theory is especially true of teachers, as they spend most of the time with students in the school environment. According to Wittmer (1993), teachers must be considered an integral part of the guidance team.

Nugent (1990) reported that teachers were the most crucial ally in a counselors attempt to deliver a successful guidance program. Teachers spend more time with students than any other school staff member; therefore they are most apt to influence kids

both collectively and individually. Their understanding of the goals of developmental guidance is of utmost importance to the success or of a guidance program.

The knowledge of guidance and counseling possessed by teachers will vary. Generally speaking, most educators are not required to enroll in guidance and counseling courses, limiting their understanding of the profession. In that regard Murro & Kottman (1995) felt that counselors should not assume that teachers know about guidance and counseling, or that they share the counselor's view about goals and outcomes.

If counselors' goals and those of teachers differ, conflict may be the outcome. Counselors who are doing a thoroughly professional job may discover that teachers and other school staff have a different view of how that guidance program is functioning. For example, teachers and administrators sometimes expect counselors to deal with difficult discipline cases. The expectation is for the counselor to cure the student's disruptive behaviors so as not to burden the teacher or principal (Nugent, 1990).

Some education professionals view counselors as junior members of the administrative team. Some expect counselors to perform bus duty, to teach classes, schedule classes, or monitor lunchroom or hallway behavior (Muro & Kottman, 1995). Ultimately, it is up to the counselors to anticipate and recognize the misconceptions so as to negotiate the true function of a guidance counselor.

According to Wilgus and Shelley (1988), counselors must have teacher support. To achieve that support, the author suggests honest, open dialogue with teachers upon the acceptance of a counselor position. The dialogue should be geared toward teacher beliefs, delivery style, and expectations of the counselor.

Open dialogue may be an important first step in closing the misconception gap between teachers and counselors. Myrick (2003) listed a myriad of commonly held misconceptions teachers have concerning the function of counselors. For instance, some teachers view counselors as administrative assistants, or evaluators. Others view counselors as dean of students, or administrator of discipline. Often teachers view counselors as strictly pro-student, and as such counselors always side with the students on issues of question.

Studies have been conducted examining the perceived role of guidance counselors. In one such study, counselors were found to be viewed in a “Helper Role” and a “Consultant Role.” In the “Helper Role,” counselor functions were as group and individual counselor, interpreter of test results, referral maker, and conductor of classroom guidance lessons. In the “Consultant Role,” counselors provided professional advice in classroom assessment, role-playing, home visits and curriculum planning (Ginter, Scalise, & Presse, 1990).

Valine, Higgins & Hatcher (1982) studied teacher attitudes toward counselors functioning in 1972 and again in 1980. In the 1972 study, researchers found that 12% of teachers sampled felt that counselors had an easier job than they. In 1980, 37% of the sample held this view. Thirty-five percent of both samples were “undecided” in understanding the role of counselors. In 1980, a significant number of teachers viewed counselors as ineffective; 26% stated this feeling and 32% were “undecided” (Valine, et al., 1982).

Wilgus and Shelley (1988) asked both teachers and counselors to participate in a role analysis of school counselors. Fifteen specific counselor duties were listed by the



authors: parent education, guidance and counseling-oriented meetings, individual counseling, group counseling, classroom programs, recognition programs, staff consultation, individual testing, group testing, staff development, referrals, classroom observations, parent contact and other (i.e. lunch room duty, bus duty, classroom substitutes, and administrative duty). Teachers and counselors rank-ordered their perceptions of how counselors spend their time. Counselors then kept a log of how they actually spent their time. The research showed that teachers perceived counselors as spending the majority of their time on individual counseling, group counseling, and parent contact, respectively. The counselor log showed that counselors spent most of their time on individual counseling, other and staff consultation, respectively. Teachers ranked other the lowest as a counselor function. In reality, other was second only to individual counseling. The researchers found that teachers thought of counselors as consultants (Wilgus & Shelley, 1988).

Alaniz (1990) conducted research that surveyed teachers and guidance counselors in eight large urban and suburban high schools. The study measured the frequency of dialogue between counselors and teachers. The results showed a general lack of communication from both counselors and teachers toward one another. The author argued that organizational solutions are needed to promote contact between the two parties. The study concluded that teachers' perceptions of the counselor role create incongruence between counselor cognition of their role and teacher perception of the counselor role. (Alaniz, 1990).

In research conducted by Morris and Hueschen (1990), questionnaires were sent to one teacher and one counselor at each of 117 schools that had participated in

Transescent Seminars held at the University of Wisconsin in Platteville. Responses were obtained from teachers and counselors and were analyzed in terms of counselor roles proposed in the Wisconsin Developmental Guidance Model. Both teachers and counselors completed identical forms, rating the extent of involvement of the counselor in each of 14 roles. The counselor role ranked highest by teachers and counselors was "Consultation with teachers about individual student concerns." The second ranked role according to teachers was "Consultation with parents." Teachers saw counselors as being more involved in their activity than counselors ranked themselves. The third ranked role according to teachers as "Individual counseling with students." The fourth ranked role according to teachers was "Consultation with administrators." Teachers and counselors were in close agreement in their ratings of consultation with teachers about individual student concerns and individual counseling with students. There were significant differences in the average ratings of only four roles: consultation with parents, referral of students to community agencies, consultation with teachers about classroom activity development, and consultation with teachers about professional concerns of the teacher (Morris & Hueschen, 1990).

Hughey, Gysbers and Starr (1993) surveyed students, parents and teachers in Missouri. The researchers found that teachers perceived counselors as facilitators of individual and small group planning for personal education, and career goals. Teachers also believed that counselors performed staff and parent consultation, test interpretation, public relation activities for staff and the community, classroom guidance activities, small group counseling, and student referrals.

Quarto (1999) investigated teacher perceptions of school counselors with and without teaching experience. The study examined perception of teachers on counseling effectiveness of experienced and inexperienced school counselors in the United States, issues on teaching experience of school counselors, comparison between perceptions of principals and teachers on effectiveness of counselors, and relationships between counseling effectiveness and work experience. A total of 152 teachers participated in the study from four states. The researcher found that teachers perceived school counselors with prior teaching experience to be the most effective in carrying out general counselor functions followed by those with community mental health experience and then those with insurance experience. Teachers perceived school counselors with teaching experience to be the most effective in carrying out general counselor functions, followed by those with community mental health and insurance experience, respectively. Teachers also perceived the type of prior work experience to be a significant factor in how effective school counselors are in interviewing a student with an emotional or behavioral problem. Teachers perceived school counselors with teaching experience to be the most effective in addressing an emotional or behavioral issue. Finally, teachers were asked to indicate which counselor they would prefer to work with based on the counselor descriptions only. Ninety-three percent indicated a preference for the school counselor with prior teaching experience, 6% for the school counselor with community mental health experiences, and 1% for the school counselor with insurance experience (Quarto, 1999).

Cuskey (1996) believed perceived counselor roles were paramount to the effectiveness of a developmental guidance program in elementary schools. The author

devised a study in which teacher perceptions regarding school counselors' functions and effectiveness in public elementary schools were examined. The research found that the most commonly perceived counselor roles by teachers were: 1) planning appropriate classroom activities, 2) contributing constructive ideas and suggestions in support of classroom teachers, 3) assisting teachers in helping students, 4) providing classroom presentations that reinforced skills and attitudes, and 5) including classroom guidance activities that were effective in making children more aware of their own behavior and feelings, were effective with parents, and provided the school with a positive climate. In addition, school counselors were seen as the most competent in the area of consultation, followed by delivery of classroom guidance. Counselors were viewed as less effective in the area of individual and small group counseling. The elementary teachers who participated in the study felt the most valuable services offered by their counselors were consultation and support for teachers, individual counseling, and developmental/classroom guidance activities. Counselors were not perceived as being available for individual counseling at the level desired (Cuskey 1996).

Oyaziwo and Imonikhe (2002) investigated how teachers view the role of school counselor at the secondary level. The researchers found that teachers believe school counselors should coordinate guidance services in the school, provide career information to students and assist them in their choice of career. Teachers also felt that counselors should act as advisors to students on disciplinary matters, deal with common juvenile problems such as truancy and stealing, and assist with administrative duties other than those of the guidance program. It was felt that counselors should also provide individual and group counseling to students, help students develop appropriate social skills, and

refer students to outside sources for additional assistance. The sampled teachers indicated that school counselors should not be responsible for collecting information about opportunities open to students, or for keeping students' cumulative records. It was felt that counselors should not administer psychological tests. Finally, the study showed that teachers believed secondary school counselors should deal with the following types of situations, listed in order of importance: educational problems, personal-social problems, career or vocational problems, and psychological problems ( Oyaziwo & Imonike, 2002).

It is evident that a variety of teacher perceptions exist regarding the function of school counselors. The perception may vary depending on the type of school and educational level of the teachers in question.

It has been suggested that the overall function of school counselors remains the same regardless of what level (primary or secondary) in which the school counselor works and regardless of teachers' perceptions. Wittmer (1993) felt that a successful developmental guidance program is one in which all school staff, including teachers, understands and appreciates the role of the school counselor. The primary task of developmental school guidance counselors was to assist all students in becoming more effective learners by providing them with appropriate programs and services in order to improve their education and learning throughout life.

### Chapter 3

#### Critical Analysis

#### Introduction

In performing a complete and detailed review of the origins of guidance counseling, the function of school counselors, and teachers' perceptions of school counselors, this chapter will evaluate the information briefly. A summary of the literature will be given, discussing the main points and important findings. An evaluation of these findings will be made. Finally, recommendations for further research in the area of school counselor function and teachers' perceptions of the function of school counselors.

#### Summary of Findings

The early function of guidance in a school setting was vocational educational training. Teachers were the main providers of guidance, which focused solely on career guidance. Little emphasis was placed on the development of the student as a whole. Key figures in the early evolution of guidance were William Burnham, Frank Parsons, Eli Weaver and Jesse B. Davis.

World conflict forced change and growth in the development of guidance. Mistakes made in assigning soldier tasks during World War I heavily influenced the creation of career tests. By World War II, all branches of the armed services used the tests to better place their recruits. Professional educators adapted the tests to use with students, where it eventually became part of school guidance.

The field of guidance counseling expanded further with added emphasis placed on the mental health of students. By the 1960s, counseling meant more than merely advising students on career options. Federal legislation made it mandatory for schools to employ a high school guidance counselor in order to secure specific funding. Further legislation later in the 1960s encouraged school districts to employ guidance counselors at the elementary level as well.

School guidance counseling has continued to change and grow, while incorporating new findings and improving delivery methods. Known as developmental guidance, the practice takes a comprehensive approach to all aspects of students' well being, through the students' educational careers. Working to promote and support developmental guidance are professional organizations such as the American Counseling Association and the American School Counselors Association.

A large portion of the literature review focused on the function of school counselors. Studies have shown much ambiguity over the actual tasks expected of a guidance counselor; some education professionals profess to not know the actual function of counselors. Additionally, counselors were often assigned tasks for which they were not trained. Often, those tasks were laid upon counselors because of logistical problems, a lack of manpower, or the misconception that counselors don't have enough to do. With the persisting confusion comes a lack of teamwork, coordination and cohesion between counselors and other school staff members. Ultimately, the misconceptions result in students not getting their needs met.

Various researchers have devised models explaining the many functions of developmental guidance counselors. The models were developed in response to the

misconceptions concerning actual counselor functions. Although some differences do exist, most researchers agreed upon general counselor functions and overall guidance outcomes.

The American School Counselors Association views the primary goal of a school counseling program is to enhance student learning through student development. The three areas of student development were academic, career, and personal/social. The areas of development were meant to be emphasized to all students in all grade levels. The Wisconsin Developmental Guidance Model has incorporated similar developmental areas, and emphasizes teamwork and coordination among counselors, teachers, administrators and support staff for a guidance program to be comprehensive and effective.

Several studies have pointed to teachers as the counselor's most important ally in delivering an effective guidance program. Guidance cannot succeed without their support. There are indications that teachers hold varying expectations and misconceptions about the role and function of guidance counselors.

A review of literature produced several studies in which teachers view counselors' functions as administrative in nature. Counselors were seen as vice-principals, dean of students, or discipline figureheads. Disparity existed between how teachers perceived counselors to spend their time and how counselors actually spent their time. Some studies suggested that teachers perceived counselors to be biased, lazy, or pro-student at the expense of the teacher. At the same time, research noted teachers perceive a need for school counselors in schools and a general willingness to cooperate with them despite incongruence.



Experts in the field of guidance counseling have acknowledged the disparity between teacher and counselors regarding the counselors' function. They have reiterated the importance of communication between all school staff members, including teachers and counselors. Despite misconceptions, the ultimate goal of comprehensive developmental guidance programs is to assist students in their education and learning throughout life.

### Conclusions

The concept of school guidance has changed and grown into a comprehensive, developmental program designed to assist all students. Guidance models have been established to provide professionals in the field a clear set of constructs in which to work. While the profession of school counseling has been in existence for quite some time, it is evident that the function of school counselors is poorly understood by those outside of the field (Maddy-Bernstein, 1994).

Several studies related to the function of school counseling have focused on teacher perceptions. An overwhelming amount of research has suggested that the perceptions of the function of school counselors differ greatly between teachers and counselors. The differences in perceptions can result in a lack of cooperation, miscommunication, mistrust, or a combination of all. The result is at best, a guidance program that is not comprehensive. At worst, the result is a completely ineffective guidance program (Quarto, 1999).

Why do these misperceptions, therefore misunderstandings, persist within and among educational professionals? Who is to blame for the lack of congruence between educators, who, by and large hold the best interests of the students at heart? Answers

may lie in the requirements mandated for prospective counselors, teachers and administrators alike. Undergraduate courses required for elementary and secondary education certification may overlook the function and significance of guidance. Thus, with little background information about the concept of developmental guidance, it is easy to comprehend why teachers may perceive it differently.

### Recommendations

Several recommendations pertaining to the function of school counselors have resulted from compiling this literature review. The literature has recommended that counselors acknowledge the misconceptions held by all school personnel concerning functions.

Another recommendation is for counselors to better understand themselves and the activities they perform for students and school staff to seek assistance from them. Accordingly, school counselors need to educate students, teachers, and others about the activities and services they offer. Seminars and conferences can be scheduled to keep all groups informed of the functions of the counselor.

The literature recommended that school counselors continue to pay close attention to how others perceive them. They should hold respect for the viewpoints of all staff members, especially teachers, in order to continue to progress in their mission of developing an effective guidance program.

A final recommendation related directly to those who train school personnel. The review of literature may be used in various undergraduate and graduate instructional programs that prepare pre-service teachers and administrators. An understanding of the literature would contribute to an increased awareness of the perceived role and function

of the counselor in a school setting. Conversely, the literature could be used for curriculum planning in school counselor training programs. An understanding of how teachers view the function of the school counselor should provide important direction to counselors-in-training as they ascertain their skills.

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